

Regulating Seismic Risk for Existing Multi-Storey Buildings in New Zealand

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Purpose

This paper presents the preliminary conclusions of the first stage of Wellington Case Study project (Regulating For Resilience in an Earthquake Vulnerable City) being undertaken by the Disaster Law Research Group at the University of Canterbury Law School.

The purpose of this research is to ascertain what tools are available to regulate the seismic safety and resilience of multi-storey building in New Zealand.

Abstract

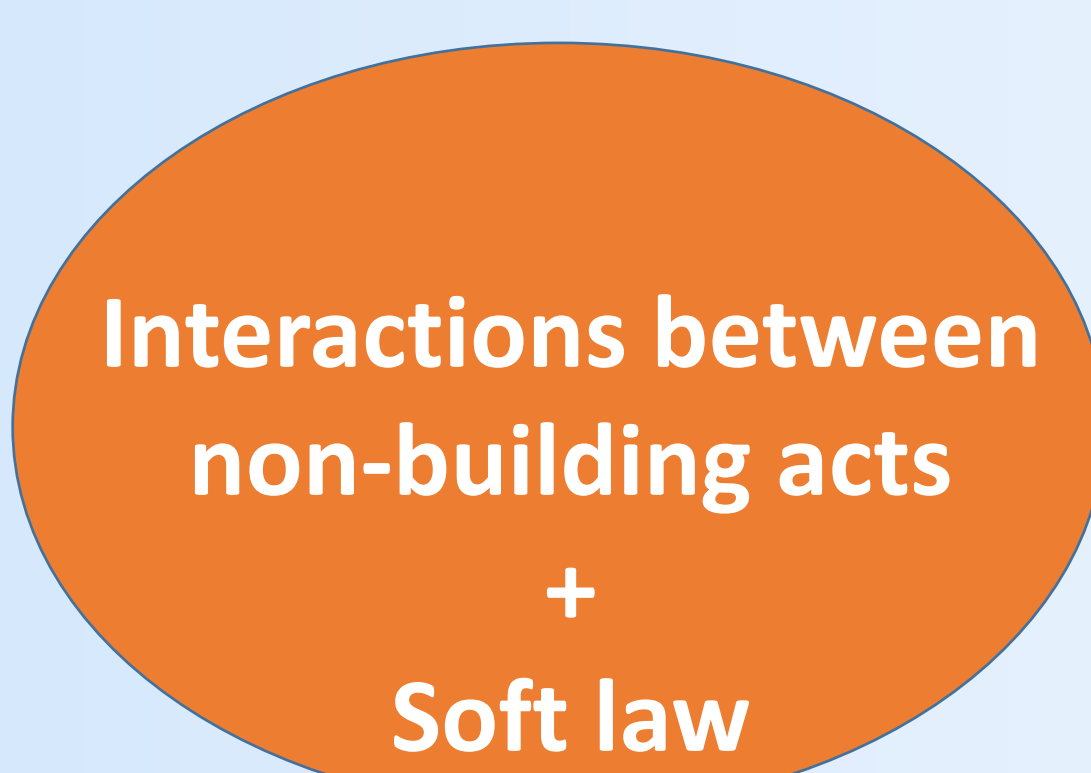
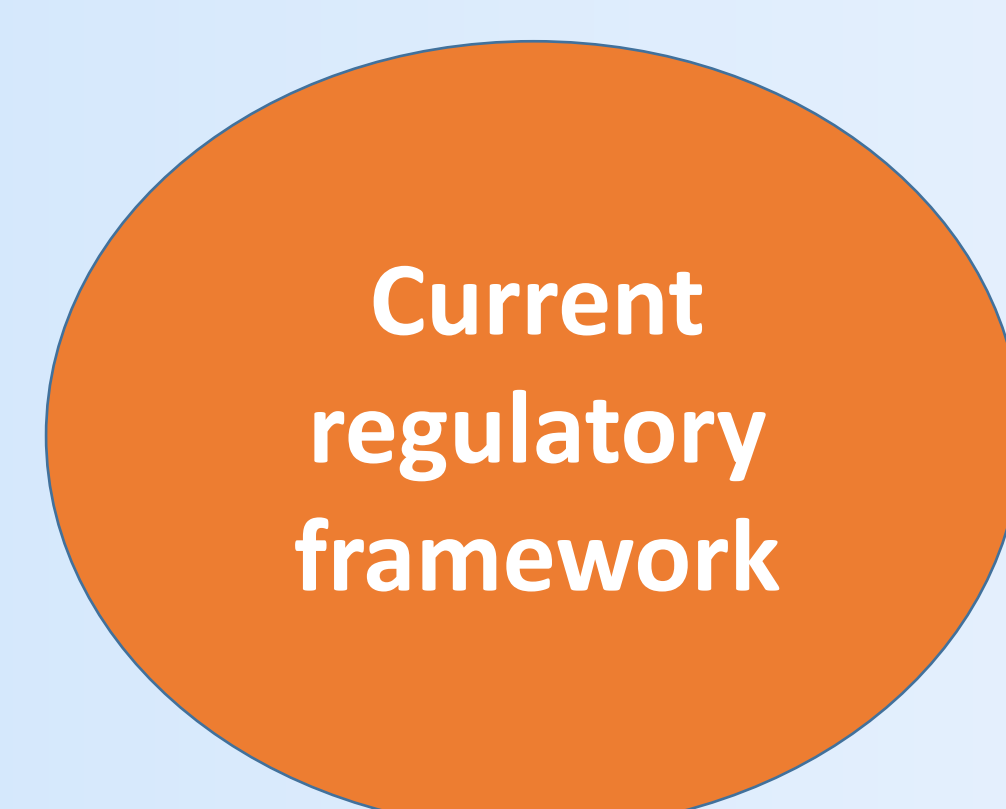
This research aims to map the current regulatory environment around improving the seismic resilience of the urban built environment. This work provides the basis for the second stage of the project which will map the regulatory tools onto the reality of the current building stock in Wellington.

Methodology

1) Using a socio-legal methodology, the current research examines the regulatory framework around seismic resilience for existing buildings in New Zealand, with a particularly focus on multi-storey in the Wellington CBD.

2) The work focusses both on the operation and impact of the formal seismic regulatory tools open to public regulators (under the amended Building Act) as other non-seismic regulatory tools.

3) As well as examining the formal regulatory frame, the work also provides an assessment of the interactions between other non-building acts (such as Health and Safety at Work Act 2015) on the requirements of seismic resilience. Other soft-law developments (particularly around informal building standards) are also examined.



Projected Project Outcomes

The final output of this work will presents this regulatory map in a clear and easily accessible manner and provide an assessment of the suitability of this at times confusing and patchy legal environment as Wellington moves towards becoming a resilient city.

The final conclusion of this work will be used to specifically examine the ability of Wellington to make this transition under the current regulatory environment as phase two of the Wellington Case Study project.

Areas of focus:



It is believed that this risk of personal liability is what led to the engineering assessments of the Wellington Library (which has a precast concrete flooring system) and its subsequent closure in March 2019. Pictured above.

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